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Sky

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SKY

"Prairies lead into the sky!"

THE PRAIRIE AND THE SEA BY WILLIAM A. QUAYLE, 1905

The remarkable sky of the Flint Hills seldom fails to create awe and encourage reflection in the beholder. Throughout the years artists have interpreted the prairie sky in many ways, but it is not only the sky that serves as Prairie Muse for the arts, as is seen in the stories and poems found in this section of the *Field Journal*. The silent openness of the prairie inspires poets William Stafford and H.C. Palmer, just as the serenity and repose of the Hills resulted in phrases coined by Rolla Clymer, longtime editor of the *El Dorado Times*, that are still used today in describing the Flint Hills. After a brief stay in Butler County, Frederic Remington went on to become world renowned for his western art. The cowboy and cattle culture of his native Cassoday inspired the paintings and bronzes of local artist Laurence Coffelt. After growing up near the town of Reece, home to an African-American community in Greenwood County, Perry Lowery gained worldwide fame as a cornet player and band leader. The challenges and pleasures of photographing the Flint Hills are considered by John Morrison as he shares some of his photographs, including wild mustangs pastured on local ranches. Poet Andy Wilkinson ponders the symbolism of freedom as well as the dilemma to contemporary society posed by the mustang. Butler County cowboy Frank Maynard rode the open range of the 1870s and wrote poems, one of which became the well-known cowboy song, "The Streets of Laredo." Jay Price provides a thoughtful reminiscence of finding Ivanpah, home of a long-deserted country school house, one among many in the Flint Hills that no longer ring out with the voices of children. A theme of the Prairie Print Makers was the simple life of the Plains, and the Coutts Memorial Museum provides a précis of this Kansas-based artistic movement.

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Anna Patricia Keller